

First I want to extend a sincere “thank-you” to the PSC for awarding me the professional growth grant. You should know that because of your generosity 3 more students now have a means to communicate their wants and needs only two weeks after implementing the program I received training on. How exciting!!!!

My grant was awarded for travel, meals and lodging costs to attend a workshop on the Picture Exchange Communication System. My trip began with a trip to Wal-Mart to purchase traction chains for my car as the first major snow storm was pummeling the Cascade Mountain range with snow. Of course that is where I needed to travel to for the workshop. The risk of my life was more than worth it!!! I arrived with only two near miss crashes and zero slide-offs! Unfortunately there were several others on the road that day that could not say the same.

The information I gained at this workshop has totally expanded how I can reach out to those students with severe communication needs. I had several aha! moments and have made changes in the way some students are receiving speech and language services from me. I have also been able to implement this very specific program with more students on my caseload than I had originally thought. One of the students is communicating her wants with full sentences and is supplementing the pictures with her own speech. It is so exciting to see my students who have struggled for so long to communicate and now they can actually make requests!! It won't be too long before she makes a change to using verbal communication.

This workshop is highly recommended for special educators, speech-language pathologists who work with non-verbal students on the autism spectrum and for parents of those students too. I wish I could have magically transported my special education team and the parents of the students I work with so they could have experienced the information first hand. I do have my work cut out for me now. It is vital that I share the information I gained with the rest of my team and I am looking forward to doing so.

Again, I wish to extend my appreciation for allowing me the opportunity to expand my knowledge for working with students who have challenging communication needs. Your dollars were well spent!

Oh...the name of the training was, “Picture Exchange Communication Basic Workshop” offered by the Pyramid Company. Your grant money went to good use for travel, food and shelter while I learned some very useful and meaningful systematic therapy program.

My plan is to implement the program for the next year and attend another advanced workshop. It was so informative and useful for the type of students I work with.

Sandy Combo
Speech-Language Pathologist
Post Falls School District #273

